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Introduced by Senator Ortiz

April 28, 2003

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Senate Resolution No. 19—Relative to skin cancer awareness.

1 WHEREAS, Malignant melanoma, a serious skin cancer, is  
2 characterized by the uncontrolled growth of pigment-producing  
3 tanning cells; and

4 WHEREAS, Melanoma has its beginnings in melanocytes, the  
5 skin cells that produce the dark protective pigment called melanin.  
6 Melanomas may suddenly appear without warning, but may also  
7 begin in or near a mole or other dark spot in the skin; and

8 WHEREAS, Melanoma generally begins as a mottled, light  
9 brown to black flat blemish with irregular borders, usually at least  
10 one-quarter inch in size. It may turn shades of red, blue, or white,  
11 crust on the surface or bleed, and most frequently appears on the  
12 upper back torso, lower legs, head, and neck; and

13 WHEREAS, Excessive exposure to the ultraviolet radiation of  
14 the sun is the most important preventable cause of melanoma.  
15 Other possible causes include genetic factors and immune  
16 deficiencies. Malignant melanoma has also been linked to past  
17 sunburns and sun exposure at younger ages; and

18 WHEREAS, Melanoma can affect men, women, and children,  
19 but individuals with increased risk include those with fair  
20 complexions, prior significant sunburns, a family member with  
21 melanoma, or a high number of atypical moles; and

22 WHEREAS, Atypical moles are unusual moles that are  
23 generally larger than normal moles, variable in color, often have  
24 irregular borders, and may occur in far greater number than regular  
25 moles; and

1 WHEREAS, The incidence of melanoma has doubled in the last  
2 20 years, and it continues to rise faster than any other cancer in  
3 women, except for lung cancer. Melanoma is the most common  
4 form of cancer among people between 25 and 29 years of age, and  
5 experts estimate that if the present rate continues, soon melanoma  
6 will strike 1 in 75 Americans; and

7 WHEREAS, Six out of seven skin cancer deaths are from  
8 malignant melanoma. Advanced malignant melanoma spreads to  
9 other organs and may result in death. When detected early, surgical  
10 removal of thin melanomas can cure the disease in most cases; and

11 WHEREAS, Early detection is crucial. There is a direct  
12 correlation between the thickness of the melanoma and the  
13 survival rate. If a melanoma is detected and treated early, the cure  
14 rate is very high. Generally, as the disease advances, the tumor  
15 thickens and spreads, lowering the survival rate; and

16 WHEREAS, Correct aggressive treatment by qualified medical  
17 professionals can lead to positive results; and

18 WHEREAS, Melanoma in its early stages may only be detected  
19 by visual inspection. Dermatologists recommend regular  
20 self-examination of the skin to detect changes in its appearance,  
21 especially changes in existing moles or blemishes. Additionally,  
22 patients with risk factors should have a complete skin examination  
23 annually; now, therefore, be it

24 *Resolved by the Senate of the State of California*, That the month  
25 of May 2003 shall be recognized as Skin Cancer Awareness Month  
26 in California, and all Californians be encouraged to make  
27 themselves and their families aware of the risk of skin cancer and  
28 the preventive measures; and be it further

29 *Resolved*, That the Senate hereby proclaims May 5, 2003, as  
30 Melanoma Awareness Monday in California to increase public  
31 awareness of the importance of routine complete skin examination  
32 to detect early melanomas; and be it further

33 *Resolved*, That the Secretary of the Senate transmit copies of  
34 this resolution to the author for appropriate distribution.